

## **AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES**

### **February 13, 2003**

**Members Present:** Sara Wolff, Doris Mundo, Barbara Melrose, Jean Haggerty, Isaac BenEzra, Janice Denton, Henry Peirce, Elsie Fetterman

**Absent:** Liz Massey

**Staff Present:** John Clobridge, Nancy Pagano, Barbara Slovin

**Other:** Doris Holden (Senior Trust Treasurer), Frank Wells (Ann Whalen Tenant and COA Rep. To Public Transportation Committee, Ferne and Burt Finger (Clark House Tenants)

**Minutes of January 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting** accepted as read.

**Comments from Citizens** Burt Finger made a presentation about the Governor's ten million dollar cut to the Prescription Advantage Program and its extremely negative financial impact to seniors like himself and his wife, Ferne. Burt wants the C.O.A. to urge Governor Romney to not allow this cut. Barbara Slovin added that the program has recently stopped accepting new members and John said that the program could end completely. According to Isaac, there are seniors who cannot afford Blue Cross Gold and have dropped it in the hope that they could sign up for Prescription Advantage. He reports that lots of people are affected by this. Barbara Melrose suggests that the C.O.A. send letters to Representative Ellen Story and Senator Stan Rosenberg urging restoration of the \$10 million to Prescription Advantage. **This was VOTED unanimously.** Doris Mundo likes the idea of "putting a face" on this issue so that the letters are more effective. She will speak further with Burt and prepare a press release and email it to members for comments before sending it out. Any proposed changes to the letter should be sent to her within 48 hours of receipt of her email.

#### **Senior Trust Treasurer's Report**

- Ferne Finger gave an update on the purchase of the new van. Senator Rosenberg's office reports that so far the state has not taken away the grant. The vendor has offered \$3500 on the trade-in of the old van, sight unseen. Ferne thinks probably this price is low because of its bad reputation. Ferne is hopeful that if the van was in good shape she could persuade him to give more, however. Presently the van has about \$1,000 of internal repairs needed, including front pads and rotor, the serpentine belt, a transmission flush, replacement of rear heater lines and wipers. It also needs \$1000 for body repairs to the rear bumper. Ferne asked if the Senior Trust would consider funding these repairs.

Nancy noted:

- Any monies gleaned from private sale of the van will go into the Town's General Fund.
- The van must be in good shape in order to be traded in to the vendor building our new van.
- Not having our van adds to the cost of trips and curtails all free or low cost trips.
- By paying \$1500-2000 for repairs we could get \$3500-\$5000 trade-in. Not paying means the Trust will likely have to come up with \$10,000, not \$5,000, toward our 20% cost of the new van/bus in December.

Barbara Melrose made a motion to reject paying the money to repair the existing van. **VOTED 7-1** (Doris Mundo-nay) The COA would like to have a written understanding about the maintenance, ownership and use of the new van and who's responsible for it. Doris would like to have a fee charged if others use it. Jean Haggerty says that there are folks who won't take advantage of trip scholarships because they are too proud to ask. She would like to explore other options. Isaac suggests that John conduct a survey as to how other agencies deal with differences in income when it comes to travel and how they feel it affects participation.

- Doris reports that investments have dropped slightly and the interest rate has dropped from .62% to .58%
- Nancy requested \$150 reimbursement for the Senior Center Club for scholarships given—**VOTED unanimously**
- Doris Mundo questioned what is written about the role of the Senior Trust in the substructure of the COA. She said Board members have a real responsibility to keep the Trust growing. Nancy said that the April-May Senior Spirit is supposed to include a solicitation by the Senior Trust. Staff would like to work with a few COA members to put together a proposal as to a philosophy and plan for both use and growth of Trust monies. This would then get on the agenda for the March COA meeting so that everyone was in agreement about what this and other solicitations should look like and how monies can be used. Isaac suggests that the COA subcommittee on funding should work with staff on this and John should prepare a packet of historical data for all COA members to consider.

**Director's Report** John has been traveling. He has met five times with the new Director of Elder Affairs, Jennifer Davis Carey. He feels she has the ear of Governor Romney and Lt. Governor Kerry Healey. "Carey's mantra is to have public-private partnerships." Isaac asked John to explain what he meant by "Newly Organized Elder Affairs" and what "Centrally Positioned Senior Center" means. John explained,

"Elder Affairs is considering major organizational changes, where (1) Elder Affairs no longer exists, with all the services it funds moving to another secretariat, or (2) Elder Affairs takes in a number of major funding areas, including medical services, or (3) Things stay constant with a minor exchange of programs.

The 'Central Positioning' of Senior Centers alludes to the fact that no matter what gets cut or expanded, the Senior Center is obligated to fill gaps or implement services."

**Parking Garage** Elsie Fetterman asked John if there had been any progress on getting breaks for seniors in the parking garage. He said that there has been discussion about whether or not to have free passes for staff to give out in special cases to seniors and how that would work. The Commission hopes to establish more free parking sites in the future. Elsie likes the system for the parking lot next to St. Brigid's where folks can buy passes in advance.

## **Committee Reports**

**Wellness** (Sara reporting) The Committee spoke with Cheryl Smith at its January 15th meeting. Cheryl will be referring patients to the various Senior Center wellness programs. The Committee is working on its own Wellness brochure and referring people to outside fitness centers like Kidsports. It is still hoped that monies can be found to fund our long term goal of establishing a state of the art senior fitness center in the Bangs.

**Transportation** (Jean reporting) Jean handed out a beautifully written summary of the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Transportation Sub-committee (see attached), which was commended by Elsie Fetterman and others. The Sub-committee has been investigating transportation needs of the Cambodian community and met with Lauren (Ren) Srey of the Health Department at its last meeting to gain a better understanding as to what the barriers are. *Related to this, Barbara Slovin told how a group of people are working together to have an event that would bring the Cambodian people from various communities together for an event. They are also working with Ren, R.S.V.P., and several Senior Center staff members. This group hopes to get Cambodian college students involved as translators, and a special event is set up for March 14<sup>th</sup>.*

The other major focus of the Transportation Sub-committee was a presentation by John Clobridge. He explained the relationship of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, P.V.T.A. and the Amherst Public Transportation Committee—both its history and functions.

Jean asked how a person can join the Senior Travel Club and Nancy explained that there is no membership list or "joining". Anyone who is 60 and older and an Amherst resident may come to the meetings and vote. Jean remarked that even though there are scholarships available to help pay for trips, some people don't feel comfortable asking for them. Are there other ways to underwrite trips, like getting a sponsor? More discussion on this will occur at future meetings.

**Facilities (Henry)** Has not met recently.

**Grants (Doris)** Grant committee met last month and is focusing on its charge. John will be writing this. John is looking into the Davis Foundation as a fund source.

**H.V.E.S.(Elsie)** No business.

**Old Business** Barbara Melrose said she was embarrassed by the way a much-publicized statement attributed to the C.O.A. was written. It said that the C.O.A. voted to repeal the \$1.30 pharmacy assessment. As she pointed out, this is not within the purview of the C.O.A.—they can only recommend to the legislature that they repeal the assessment. She said the C.O.A. did not vote the way they were quoted. The C.O.A. henceforth is requiring that any public remarks attributed to them be first sent to the members for comment. Sara Wolff asked that documents given out henceforth be written in one font and in a more conventional manner.

**New Business** No time to discuss

**Adjournment at 10:30 AM**

**Respectfully Submitted by Nancy Hirsh Pagano**

